

INSTRUCTOR LITERATURE SERIES


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LINCOLN

BY HARRIET G. REITER



F. A. OWEN PUBLISHING COMPANY
DANVILLE, N. Y.



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The Story of Lincoln

BY

Harriet G. Reiter



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Statue of Lincoln, Lincoln Park, Chicago.

The Story of Lincoln.



ABOUT the time that the colonies in America had thrown off the British yoke and gained their freedom, a great tide of immigration set in toward the West. The people who had been west of the Alleghanies returned with wonderful tales of the beautiful country which they had seen. Although the way was beset by many dangers, and cruel savages waited to waylay and kill the new settlers, many were willing and anxious to risk all to find a home in this new land of Kentucky.

Among others that traveled along the wilderness road leading into Kentucky, was a family by the name of Lincoln. When they reached their journey's end, Mr. Lincoln obtained a large tract of land. The lurking savages were still dangerous, so the new settlers had to live in or near the forts.

Mr. Lincoln at once began to clear the timber from his land. This was a very dangerous task because of the Indians. About two years went by when one day as Mr. Lincoln was in his clearing with little Tom, only six years old, an Indian crept up behind some brush and killed the father. He then leaped out and seized the little boy and started off with him. Two of the older Lincoln boys were working near and hurried to the rescue. One of them shot the Indian and saved his little brother.

The death of the father was a very serious matter to a poor family left in a new country. Little Tom seems to have had to shift for himself and get his living as best he could. And only a living it was, for schooling he had none. All the writing he could do was to barely scrawl his name, but although he was ignorant and poor, he was honest and very well thought of by his neighbors.

When he was about twenty-five years old he bought a farm, and not a great while after he married a sweet young girl named Nancy Hanks. The young wife's new home was a rude log cabin, but almost all of the buildings

in Kentucky at that time were built of logs, so it was just as good a home as most of the people had.

It was in this humble home on the 12th of February, 1809, that Abraham Lincoln was born. His proud parents named him Abraham for his grandfather, who had been killed by the Indians. Although the Lincoln home was poverty stricken and bare of the common comforts of life, it held a happy family.

When Abraham was four years old the family moved to another cabin very much like the first. The family were still very poor. The mother often took her rifle and hunted game to supply the family table. She killed bear and deer, dressed the meat with her own hands, and the skins she fashioned into clothing, moccasins, and caps. But through all this toil and hardship the busy mother found time to spend with her children.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln were determined their children should not grow up ignorant. Abraham had his first lessons in reading and spelling from his mother. Years afterward he said one of the first things he could remember

was sitting at her feet with his sister, eagerly listening to her as she told them fairy tales and legends.

When the little lad was seven years old, Zachariah Riney came into the neighborhood and the Lincoln children attended their first school. This did not last long and soon Caleb Hazel succeeded Riney as Lincoln's teacher.

The chances for schooling were rare, being largely a matter of chance. Sometimes a young man waiting for something better to turn up would teach a term or two, and board round with the families from which he had pupils. The parents could only afford to pay the teacher a little, and usually looked for someone with a strong and ready arm to keep the big boys in order.

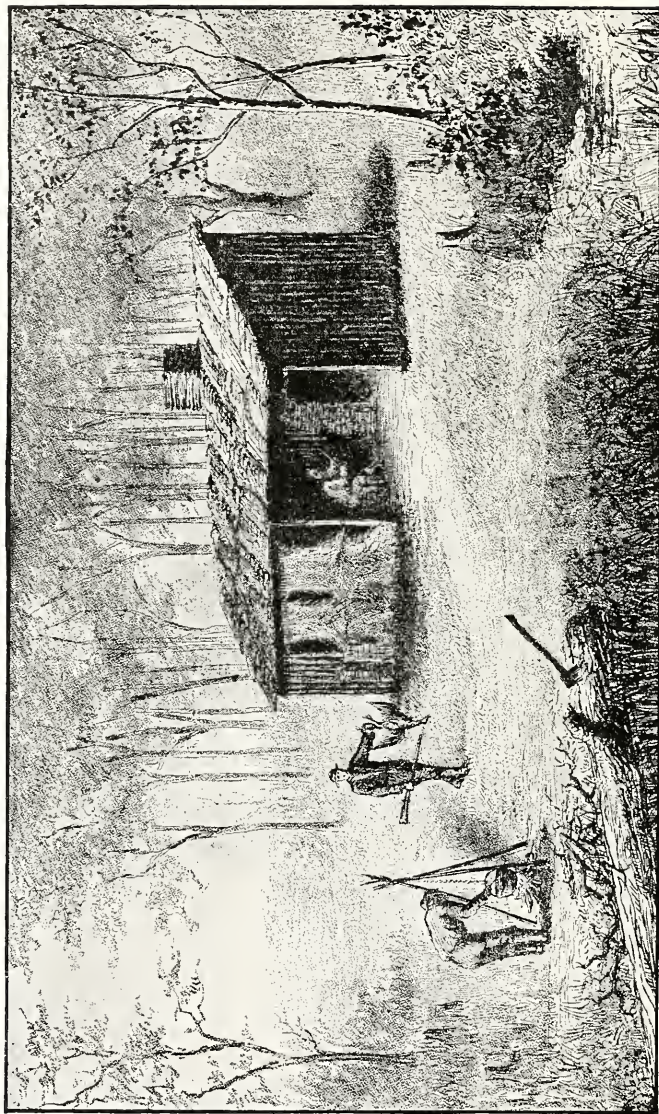
Abraham was a very bright boy in school, indeed he went far ahead of the rest of his classmates. He was not satisfied with what he learned in the daytime but studied in the evenings. As they could not afford candles, he cut up spicewood twigs and burned them for a light.

In those early times preaching services were

held out of doors, with the forest trees for a temple and a stump for an altar. The preachers traveled long distances from place to place, with sometimes months between visits. Abraham thought these traveling preachers most wonderful men, and would ride long distances to hear them. He admired them so much that he tried to do as they did. He would gather his playmates around him and preach and pound, until his audience were frightened into tears.

Thomas Lincoln grew tired of living in Kentucky. He decided he would seek a new home across the river in Indiana. He loaded his goods on a raft and started for the Ohio River. But when he reached the middle of the river, the raft was upset, and all he owned was at the bottom of the Ohio. He managed to save a few things, borrowed an ox team, and started to find a good place to locate.

Meanwhile, his family remained at the old home anxiously awaiting his return. He came back with good news and the family set out on their journey. There were Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln, Abe and his sister Sarah, and a cousin,



The Half-Faced Camp.

Dennis Hanks. No doubt the children enjoyed the journey. The forest with its green trees, singing birds, and strange animals, was a never-ending wonder to these young people making their first journey away from home.

When the travelers arrived at the spot Mr. Lincoln had chosen for his home, an axe was put into seven year old Abe's hand, and he was told to go to work to help make a clearing for the camp.

There was no time to build a house, so a half-faced camp was put up to shelter them from the winter storms. Four posts were set in the ground, poles put across the top and rude slabs fastened to them for a roof. Three sides were enclosed with poles chinked in with clay. The open side was screened with a curtain of skins. In one corner was a great fireplace made of sticks and mud.

Times grew very hard for the Lincolns. Their furniture was at the bottom of the Ohio. They made chairs of rude slabs with pegs driven in for legs. The frame work of their bed was made of poles and covered with skins. The children slept on the floor on a pile of leaves.

They had to use thorns for pins. No cloth was to be had, unless the mother spun and wove it herself. Little Abe wore buckskin trousers, a linsey-woolsey shirt dyed with bark or berries and buttoned with bits of cork covered with cloth. For a hat he wore a coon skin cap with the tail hanging down behind. This was used both to trim the cap and for a handle to pull it off.

In February, Mr. Lincoln and the boys began to get the logs ready for the new home. The cabin, when it was finished, had only one room with a loft above. There was no door or window, not even a deer skin hung before the opening or a greased paper over the hole that admitted the light. There was no floor but the hard packed earth. When the children went to bed at night they climbed to the loft by means of pegs driven into the walls.

Is it any wonder that through all this suffering and hardship the poor mother fell sick? Little Abe saw his first great sorrow when his mother folded her tired hands and went to her long rest. No one can imagine a more forlorn family than the Lincolns. Abe grieved bitterly

in his loneliness. Long years after he said, "All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother."

It was the custom in pioneer days to have a memorial sermon preached at any time within a year after the death of a person, as a preacher could rarely be had at the time of the funeral. So as soon as Mrs. Lincoln was buried, Abraham sat down and wrote his first letter to Parson Elkin in Kentucky, asking him to come and preach his mother's funeral sermon. After a long time he received an answer from the good man, and in the early summer, he kept his promise and preached Nancy Lincoln's funeral sermon.

It was a most miserable household with little twelve year old Sarah at its head. The three children soon grew shabby and ragged. Their principal food was venison and birds broiled over the coals or an ash cake of meal, which the father mixed. But the children seemed to flourish under this hard fare and Abe had one joy—books. The first books he read were the Bible, Aesop's Fables, and The Pilgrim's Progress. He read and re-read these books. He

knew many passages in them by heart and everyone of Aesop's Fables.

He also read a life of Henry Clay, and Ramsey's Life of Washington. He once borrowed Weem's Life of Washington from a neighbor and carried the treasure home in the bosom of his hunting shirt. He read late by the light of a tallow dip and then put the book in a crack between the logs for safe keeping. But the hiding place proved anything but safe, for a storm came up in the night and the book got wet.

Abe hardly knew what to do, he certainly had no money to pay for the book. He carried it back to the owner, who pretended to be very cross and asked him what he proposed to do about it. The little boy offered to do what Mr. Crawford thought was right, so they bargained that Abe was to pull fodder three days. "Does that pay for the book or for the damage done to it?" asked wise Abe.

"Wall I allow," said Mr. Crawford, "that it won't be much account to me or anybody else now, and the bargain is that you pull fodder three days, and the book is yours."

This was the first book that Abe ever bought. In reading the life of our great Washington his heart was stirred with a growing love for his country. He never forgot the lessons he learned reading of the brave struggles of our forefathers for independence.

Mr. Lincoln went to Kentucky on a visit and returned with a new wife. This woman proved a very kind and wise mother to the neglected Lincoln children. She brought with her new furniture, a floor was put down in the cabin, a door made, and glass put into the windows. Everything began to look more homelike and comfortable. The house was full to overflowing with children, for besides the three in the Lincoln family, Mrs. Lincoln had brought her own three children. The three boys climbed to their bed in the loft at night, and slept on a husk mattress so narrow, that, when one turned over, all three had to turn.

Abe, about this time, got some new books. His mother said, "He read everything he could lay his hands on." Lincoln himself said that he read everything in the country for fifty miles around. Whenever he heard of a new book he

forthwith went and borrowed it. The parts he wished to remember he copied down on a board with charcoal. Then when he got hold of paper, he would re-copy and memorize them. The wooden fireshovel was one of his favorite places for writing and ciphering. When it became covered, he would shave the black part off and begin again. When he plowed a long furrow and stopped to let the horses rest, out came his book and he would read awhile, sitting on top of the rail fence.

He could only go to school a few days each year, but it did not make much difference, as he soon knew all the rude teachers of the frontier could teach him. He had to work very hard. He said of those early days, that the axe was rarely out of his hand. When his father had no work, he hired out to the neighbors, for whom he did all kinds of work from carpentering to tending the baby.

But as much as he loved to read, and as hard as he had to work, he still found time to be with his friends. He knew so many jokes and could tell a story so well that he was a general favorite, and no gathering was complete with-

out him. He was unusually tall and strong for his age and excelled in all the rude sports of pioneer days. He was known far and wide for his skill as a wrestler.

He had a perfect passion for speech making and often walked many miles to hear a speech. He had such a fine memory that he could repeat sermons and speeches he heard, imitating the orator even to the tones of voice and gesture. He practiced so much that his angry father said that he neglected his work, and that there was no getting any work from the hired men when Abe mounted a stump. In the habit of careful study, in the memorizing of the best in the books he read, and in his speech making, he was unconsciously fitting himself to be a great leader of men. Even then everyone listened eagerly to what he had to say.

The only way the western people had of getting their produce to market was by taking it down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. Abe begged his parents to let him build a flat boat and make a trip down the river. Their consent was finally given, and he went to work on his boat. When he had it finished he stood

looking at it, wondering what he could do to make it stronger. Some men came up looking for a boat to take them out to a waiting steam boat. Lincoln's boat was chosen and he paddled them out. When they were on board, Abe called to them that they had not paid him. Each then threw him a half dollar. He was so surprised for he had expected much less. He himself said, "I could not credit that I, a poor boy, had earned a dollar in less than a day; that by honest work I had earned a dollar. I was a more hopeful and thoughtful boy from that time."

Soon after, a man hired him at eight dollars a month, to take a flat boat of produce to New Orleans. This trip was a great education to the back-woods boy, who was now seeing the world beyond his home for the first time. On this trip he got his first near view of slavery, and in seeing squads of human beings driven off to be sold he no doubt realized as he never had before, how serious a blot this custom was on a country said to be free.

When Abraham was twenty-one his father decided to move again, this time to Illinois.

Young Lincoln was a tall strong fellow of six feet and four inches. It was said, "he could strike the hardest blow with the axe or maul, jump higher and farther than any of his fellows, and that there was no one, far or near, that could lay him on his back."

He helped his father get settled in his new home. He and Thomas Hanks split rails to fence ten acres of land. These were not the first rails by many that he had made, yet these were the rails that gave him the nickname of "The Rail Splitter." Soon after he decided to start out in life for himself. He had another chance to go to New Orleans in a flat boat. Here again was he much impressed by seeing the slave markets. It is said that he remarked, "If ever I get a chance to hit that thing, I'll hit it hard."

When Abraham came back from his river trip he went to clerk in a country store. Here, as everywhere, he became popular by his wit, learning, and honesty. Once when a man persisted in swearing when women were present Lincoln took him out with the remark, "Well, if you must be whipped, I suppose I might as

well whip you as any other man.” He knocked him down, rubbed smart weed on his face until the man howled for mercy, then took him to the pump and washed his eyes for him. While Lincoln never fought for the love of fighting, yet he was the unfailing friend of law and order and the terror of every rogue.

He still kept on with his studies, and that he might improve in speech making, he walked several miles to attend the meetings of a debating society. He walked six miles to get the only English grammar to be had in the country, and studied it diligently until he had it thoroughly mastered. In all his life he had had less than a year's schooling all told, but his experience had taught him that only through knowledge could he gain power over men. So knowledge he determined to have. He already saw that he was the equal of the great men of the country and could make a better speech than many.

One day, hearing a candidate making a poor speech he mounted a box and made a far better one. The candidate was much interested and asked him “where he had learned so much and

how he could do so well.” He then urged Lincoln to keep on with his study.

Young Lincoln soon announced that he was a candidate for a public office, but before the election, a war broke out with the Black Hawk Indians. Lincoln volunteered. He went to the north to join the regular troops at the head of a company of men from his own county. There he was chosen captain. A man by the name of Kirkpatrick wanted to be captain but his own men insisted on Lincoln. So it was decided that all in favor of him should form a line on one side of the road, and all in favor of Kirkpatrick on the other. When the lines were formed, Lincoln’s was found to be twice as long as the other, so he was declared elected. He afterwards said that nothing in his life had ever given him so much pleasure.

Robert Anderson, a lieutenant, received Lincoln’s company into the service. This same Anderson was the man who commanded Fort Sumter when the first shot was fired that opened the great Civil War. The Black Hawk war was soon over and Lincoln was free to look after the office he wanted, but he was defeated.

He was not much disappointed for he ran well in his own county, and had become so much better known over the state, that the next time he tried for office he was successful.

He tried keeping store but failed. He said his store "winked out" leaving him with a load of debt. It seemed to him so large that he spoke of it always as "the national debt." He began studying law, the lawyers good-naturedly lending him their books. Soon he took small cases for his neighbors, and was appointed postmaster of a village postoffice. As he could not be in one place all the time, he carried the postoffice in his hat. When anyone asked for mail he would take off his hat and sort over what was there. The newspapers that came, he always took time to read before they were called for by their owners.

The little village melted away, as is the habit of western towns, and with it the postoffice. Lincoln then turned his attention to surveying, which he worked at for some time, still keeping up his law studies. When he was twenty-five he again ran for the State Legislature, and this time was elected. When his term was out he

was again elected. During this term he voted against slavery being extended, and he also met Stephen A. Douglas who was afterward to be his great rival.

In 1837 Lincoln moved to Springfield, the new capital of Illinois, and there he lived until he was elected President.

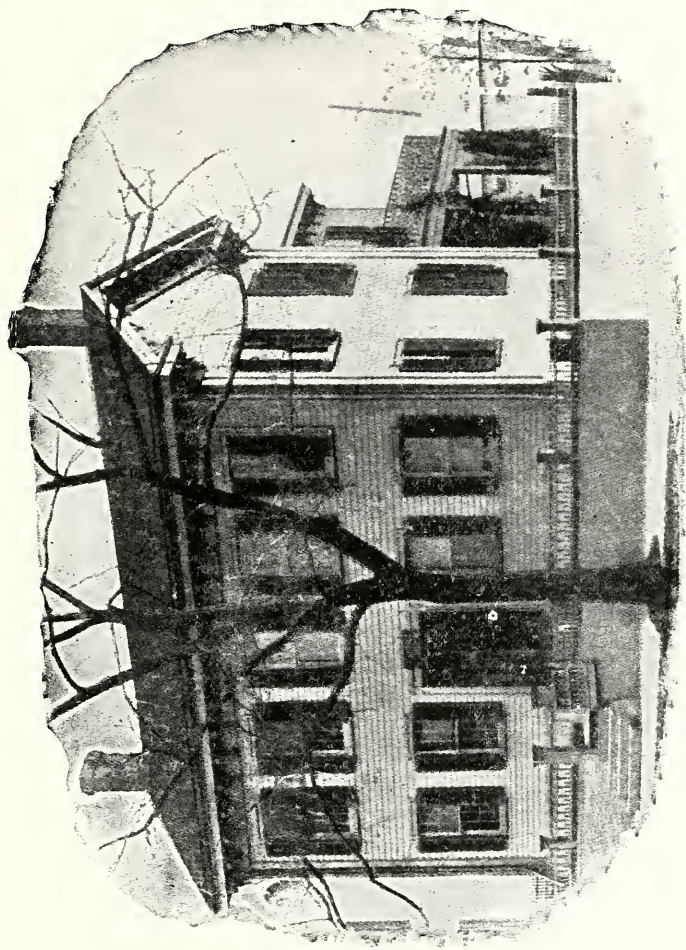
He had his few possessions packed into a pair of saddle bags thrown over the back of a borrowed horse. So far he had been able to make only a very meager living, being hampered by his "national debt." He went to his friend Josiah Speed's general store, and was dismayed to find that it would cost seventeen dollars to furnish a room. Mr. Speed felt so sorry for him when he saw his sadness, that he told him he could share his room. Lincoln asked where it was and carried up his saddle bags. He came down laughing and said, "Speed, I am moved."

Times grew more prosperous and he steadily gained favor and friends. He was very popular in society because of his entertaining stories and his wit. He met and married Mary Todd.

a witty, highly educated girl, who proved a good wife to him.

Lincoln now turned longing eyes toward Congress and Washington, but he had several times to step aside for other men, whom he thought had the better right to go. But his time came finally and he was elected. In Congress he attracted much attention. Every one listened when he got up to speak on any subject. He had a style all his own, and he kept any company in which he might be, in a perfect roar of laughter by his droll stories.

He was once taken by a party of friends to see Ex-President Van Buren who was stopping at a dull hotel in a small town. Mr. Van Buren said that the only drawback the visit had, was that his sides were sore for a week from laughing at Lincoln's stories. When Mr. Lincoln's term at Washington was ended he went back to Springfield and his law practice. He had met eastern men of great refinement and culture, and he felt his own lack of early training. So again he took up his studying, determined that he would make himself the equal of the college-bred men.



Lincoln's Home, Springfield, Illinois.

As the years went by, the country became more and more aroused over the question of slavery. The people of the North said that there should be no more slave states, while the South were determined to extend slavery. This question was discussed at all political meetings, and at last Lincoln felt that it was his duty once more to enter public life. He ran for United States Senator against Stephen A. Douglas. Meetings were held all over the state by these men. Douglas would make a speech and Lincoln would follow him with another speech, answering him and asking such shrewd questions that Douglas was often much embarrassed to answer them.

These speeches were printed all over the country. Lincoln was defeated, but by these great speeches he had become widely known all over the United States. People began asking who this man was who had worsted Stephen A. Douglas, the greatest speaker of that time.

And, on learning of his early struggles, a great reverence filled their hearts for this wonderful man, who had won such great victories in his own life. They felt that he was the only

man great enough and strong enough to save our country.

In November, 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected to the highest office in our land. When it was known that he was elected, several southern states announced that they were going to leave the United States and set up a government of their own. It was yet several months until Lincoln would be in office, so he could do nothing to stop the dreadful calamity that was coming upon the country. The President then in office did not do anything to protect the government stores and arms in the southern forts. The seceding states seized these stores to help them carry on a war, if one came.

When the 4th of March arrived, Lincoln took the oath of office. The country was in an uproar. Everyone was asking what the new President would do. Would he be equal to the great task before him, of saving the Union? The question was soon answered. People soon found what a powerful man stood at the head of the nation.

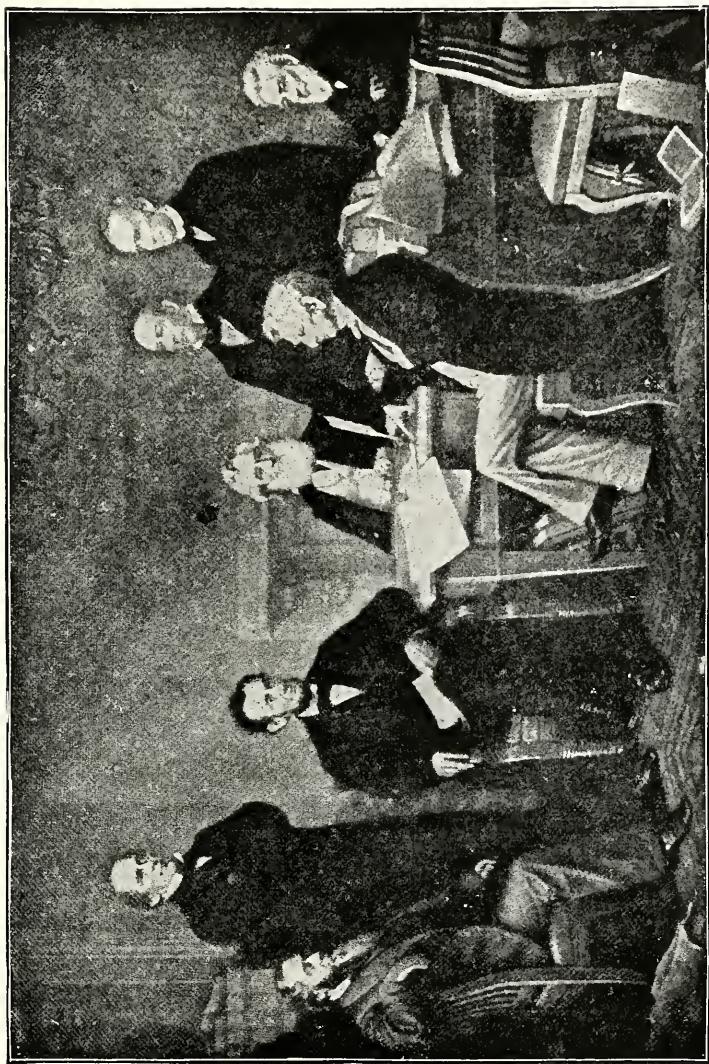
On the 12th of April, Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor was fired upon, and brave Major

Anderson was forced to surrender. The South had fired the first shot and the whole North responded to Lincoln's call for men to preserve and protect the Union.

Troops were sent to the front, but many hoped that war would yet be avoided. Lincoln did all that could be done, but with no effect. The South went on with preparations for war, and was joined by yet more states. The bitter struggle begun between the slave states and the free states was to go on for four long years. It ended only when the South had used all her wealth and resources, and many, many brave men of both North and South had answered to the last roll call.

Lincoln at first had had no idea of freeing the slaves. He desired only to save the Union and prevent slavery in new states. But as time went on, it was found that slavery must be done away with. So in September, 1862, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. Slavery was abolished forever in this free country.

There were in the President's family two little sons, Willie and Tad as they were called. These boys were passionately loved by their



First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation

father. Visitors at the White House were often entertained by Mr. Lincoln with accounts of their pranks. Both fell very ill and soon it was known that Willie could not get well. Mr. Lincoln could scarcely get over this great blow. He had always been a very religious man, but from this time on he seems to have depended more and more on a Higher Power. As he once told a visiting committee, he was "deeply concerned not to know if the Lord was on his side but if he was on the Lord's side."

At the close of Lincoln's first term, and after many severe defeats, things began to look brighter for the Union. The President was the idol of the North, and well did he deserve the title of "Father Abraham." The people showed the faith they had in him by electing him President for the second term. He took the oath of office for the second time in March, 1865. Soon after the glad news went over the country that the South had laid down their arms and the war was over. One of the last kind acts that Lincoln did, was to tell General Grant to let the conquered soldiers take their horses home to do their plowing. But while the coun-

try was in the midst of rejoicing because the great struggle was ended, the awful news came that President Lincoln had been shot. The joy had turned to grief, the flags that had floated so joyously were put at half mast. But the assassin's bullet could not undo what this great man had done. That our country is today a union unbroken is due to the wonderful efforts of Abraham Lincoln.

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!

O Captain! My Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weathered every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring ;
But O heart! heart! heart!

O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells ;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths, for you the shores
a-crowding,

For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning ;
Here, Captain! dear father!

This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and
done,

From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won ;

Exult, O shores, and ring O bells !

But I with mournful tread

Walk the deck my Captain lies

Fallen cold and dead.

—*Walt Whitman.*

